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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 09/12/07

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ARTICLES:

(1) Text of Prime Minister Abe's Resignation Statement

ASAHI SHIMBUN ONLINE  
14:22, September 12, 2007

Today I decided that I should step down as prime minister. The results of the House of Councillors election were harsh, but I decided to stay out of determination that the reform line must not be stopped, and I made every effort to have it continue. Regarding our actions in the war on terrorism, as well, I was of the opinion that we have received high praise internationally and that we must continue (our role). Keeping in mind that we have a responsibility to see this through, I gave it everything I had, and I said that I staked my position on it.

I made every effort, and in the full knowledge that I was putting myself at risk, I went forward.

I asked DPJ President Ozawa for a meeting with the goal of conveying my frank thoughts and ideas. Unfortunately, my request was effectively rebuffed.

I wondered what I should do so that (Japan) can continue (taking part in) the war on terrorism. I came to the conclusion that the situation had to be changed and that we should aim to continue (taking part in) the war on terrorism under the leadership of a new

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prime minister. A new prime minister should also be the one to attend the coming meeting of the UN General Assembly.

I stayed on out of the determination to continue reform, and I reshuffled the cabinet, but given the current situation, I realized it would be difficult to move forward strongly on policy based on the support and trust of the people. I came to the conclusion that I had to change the situation by bringing matters to a close myself.

I conveyed my intention to the five top officials in the LDP, and I instructed them that the party needs to choose its next president quickly so as to avoid a political vacuum. If the decision (on a successor) is put off, the chaos in the Diet will grow, so I determined to make my decision (to resign) quickly.

(2) Opposition parties to call for a dissolution of Lower House and a snap election with Prime Minister Abe's announcement of his intention to resign

YOMIURI ONLINE NEWS (Almost full)  
September 12, 2007, 15:22 p.m.

Following Prime Minister Abe's (President of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)) announcement of his intention to step down as prime minister, the LDP will hold a presidential election to choose a successor to Abe.

A new president is expected to be nominated as prime minister in the Diet. But the opposition parties are calling for an early dissolution of the Lower House and a snap election. They may refuse to respond to discussion under a new prime minister, thereby throwing the Diet into confusion. The confusion is certain to be prolonged.

The LDP leadership intends to discuss without delay when and how to hold a presidential election. One possibility is that the LDP lawmakers and the representatives of the party's local chapters will elect a new president without the participation of rank-and-file party members as an emergency measure.

As a presidential candidate, the Aso faction and junior lawmakers

recommend Secretary General Aso, who has broad experience. Aso is well-known and popular with the public. Some pin hopes on him as the "face" of the next Lower House election. Former Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, who has been critical of Prime Minister Abe's foreign policy and distanced himself from Abe, also may run in the presidential election, emphasizing the need for a change from Abe's policy line.

Some veteran lawmakers in the LDP recommend former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda. Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano is also

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being named.

Interpellations in the Diet have now been cancelled at the request of the government and the ruling camp. With Abe's declaration of his intention to step down, Diet deliberations are unlikely to occur before a new prime minister is nominated.

In the Lower House, a new president of the LDP will be designated as prime minister, but in the Upper House, a candidate backed by opposition parties will be designated as prime minister. In line with the provisions of the Constitution, the person designated by

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the Lower House will precede the person designated by the Upper House.

For a new prime minister, the first challenge will be how to prepare legislation that will allow the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling operations in the Indian Ocean. The government and the ruling coalition intend to submit a new bill aimed at continuing the refueling mission to the Diet. So the current Diet session will be certain to be extended significantly.

However, the opposition bloc is unlikely to respond to deliberations and instead it is likely to intensify their offensive in calling for an early dissolution of the Lower House and a snap election. The ruling and opposition parties are likely to engage now in a full confrontation.

(3) Prime Minister Abe decides to step down to take responsibility for political confusion

TOKYO SHIMBUN ONLINE (Abridged)  
13:13, September 12, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe earlier today conveyed to LDP executives his intention to step down to take responsibility for political confusion resulting from, among other matters, political fund scandals involving cabinet ministers. Abe has been under fire for his decision to remain in office despite the ruling bloc's crushing defeat in the July Upper House election. Many LDP members have also complained that they would not be able to fight the next Lower House election under Prime Minister Abe.

Following Abe's decision to resign, the LDP is expected to conduct a party presidential election at an early date to determine its new leader. The selection process is likely to proceed under the leadership of Secretary General Taro Aso and other LDP executives who have been supporting Prime Minister Abe.

After the July election, Abe played up his plan to remain in power, declaring: "It is my responsibility to keep implementing reforms. A political vacuum must not be created." He has just recently shuffled the lineups of his cabinet and LDP executives in an effort to revamp his administration.

But it came to light on August 27 that an agricultural mutual aid association headed by Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Takehiko Endo improperly received government subsidies, and Endo stepped down to take responsibility for it. This was soon followed by improper funds management by Environment Minister Ichiro Kamoshita and Declining Birthrate Minister Yoko Kamikawa. Raising questions about Abe's responsibility for appointing them, the opposition parties were intensifying their offensive against Abe,

with a censure motion against him in mind. (Kyodo)

(4) Prime Minister Abe tells senior ruling party members he will step down

YOMIURI (Full)  
September 12, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided to resign from his post and relayed this decision to senior ruling party members today.

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He will announce the decision in a press conference this afternoon. Observers see that the prime minister has judged it difficult to continue to steer his government due to the Liberal Democratic Party's crushing defeat in the July House of Councillors election.

Learning of the prime minister's intention, the government told the Diet to cancel the planned representative interpellation session.

In the LDP, the selection of candidates to succeed Abe as LDP president and prime minister will start in earnest. Abe assumed the premiership in September 2006 at the age of 51, becoming the youngest prime minister in the postwar era. He worked to improve Japan's relations with China and South Korea, which had deteriorated under the Koizumi administration. He also stepped up efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue and the issue of North Korea's past abductions of Japanese nationals.

On internal affairs, Abe made such achievements as revising the Fundamental Law of Education and upgrading the Defense Agency to ministry status. In addition, he continued the Koizumi administration's reform line, making efforts for such challenges as reallocating road-construction revenues for general expenditures.

(5) Prime Minister Abe conveys intention to resign to LDP secretary general

NIKKEI ONLINE  
13:00, September 12, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe today conveyed his intention to step down from office. He appears to have decided to resign in consideration of the present situation in which the cabinet's approval rating has remained low after the crushing defeat in the July House of Councillors election due to a series of politics-money-scandals, as well as the resignation of his cabinet ministers. The expectation is that the Abe cabinet will formally announce at a press conference sometime today that it will resign en masse. The focus has now shifted to whom the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will pick as its new president, replacing Abe. The ongoing extraordinary session of the Diet has fallen into chaos.

Secretary General Taro Aso told reporters at noon today: "I have

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heard (from Abe) his intention to resign. Regarding the reason, he told me that he does not have the ability to unify the party." Abe also told Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima: "I won't be able to reply to questions by party representatives." Following this, Oshima requested Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka to put off the planned schedule for the questioning sessions by party representatives at the Lower House plenary session.

The Diet was to start this afternoon a questioning session by party representatives at the Lower House. The outlook is that the Diet schedule will be considerably postponed.

(6) Prime Minister Abe decides to step down, judging it would be difficult for him to maintain his administration

Mainichi Online (Excerpts)  
13:42, September 12, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sept. 12 decided to step down and

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conveyed his decision to senior officials of the ruling camp. Following the crushing defeat in the Upper House election, Abe has tried to reshape his administration through reshuffling. However, he has failed to open up any prospects for extending the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law in the extraordinary Diet session. He was also bound to face a fierce offensive over the politics and money issue. As such, he appears to have judged that it would be difficult for him to maintain his administration. Now that Abe has been forced to step down even before his administration marks its first anniversary, the effort to select his successor as Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president will begin in a frenzy.

The prime minister will hold a press conference at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) at 2:00 p.m. on Sept. 12 and formally announce his decision to resign. He earlier telephoned LDP Secretary General Taro Aso and Diet Affairs Committee Chairman

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Tadamori Oshima and conveyed his decision to step down, noting, "I will not be able to reply in the question-and-answer session in the Diet." Regarding Abe's decision to quit, Aso told reporters, "I knew of Prime Minister Abe's intention to step down from long before. He said that he had no power base in the Diet." According to a senior LDP official, Abe reportedly said, "I cannot attend the question-and-answer session in the Diet for health reasons." Abe has been taking a break from his official duties since yesterday, citing a cold. A question-and-answer session in the extraordinary Diet session convened on Sept. 11 for representatives of ruling and opposition parties and other parliamentary groups in connection with the prime minister's policy speech was scheduled for the 12th, but it was cancelled on short notice.

The prime minister decided to stay on, though the LDP suffered a devastating defeat in the July 29 Upper House election due to the impact of the pension flap. He reshuffled his cabinet on August 27 to reshape the administration. However, his efforts have suffered a major setback, because Agriculture Minister Takehiko Endo was forced to resign over the illegal receipt of subsidies. Furthermore, the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, the law that serves as the basis for dispatching MSDF vessels in the Indian Ocean, expires on Nov. 1. However, with the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) remaining opposed to an extension of the law, a bill allowing the continuation of the MSDF operations has faced bleak prospects of securing Diet approval in the current session of the Diet. The government and the ruling camp had aimed to find a breakthrough by enacting a new law. However, the prime minister in Sydney, which he was visiting to take part in the APEC summit, held a press conference on Sept. 9 and noted that he would stake his premiership on the continuation of refueling activities. He also indicated his resolve to step down if his effort failed. Concerning the resignation of the prime minister, there has been a rumor going around that some weekly magazines due to be published later in the week planed to report a scandal involving Abe.

Following Abe's announcement of his decision to quit, the LDP will start selecting his successor as LDP president. Aso and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda have been floated as candidates.

(7) Prime Minister Abe now under strong fire from both ruling and opposition blocs for his intention to resign as prime minister

MAINICHI ONLINE NEWS (Excerpts)  
September 12, 2007

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Prime Minister Shinzo Abe conveyed his intention to resign as prime minister to senior members of the ruling coalition. But he faces strong criticism from both the ruling and opposition parties because he declared his intention to step down at a time when interpellations in both the chambers of the Diet are about to start

after he delivered his keynote address. One lawmaker argued, "He is utterly irresponsible."

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama commented: "It's irresponsible to step down at this point in time. He should have resigned much earlier." Social Democratic Party (SDP) Chairperson Mizuho Fukushima noted: "It's irresponsible to leave his job unfinished. He should have resigned immediately after the Upper House election."

A mid-level lawmaker made this critical comment: "The (ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)) will be caught up in the selection of a successor. There is an immeasurable impact on national politics. The nation is now in a critical situation."

The LDP is likely to be preoccupied over the selection of a successor.

There will be inevitably a significant impact on deliberations in the Diet on what to do about the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, the legal basis for the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operations in the Indian Ocean, and new legislation to replace that law.

(8) Ambassador Schieffer: "We are ready to disclose information about antiterrorism operations

SANKEI ONLINE NEWS (Full)  
September 12, 2007, 12:58 p.m.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano this morning met with US Ambassador to Japan J. Thomas Schieffer at the Prime Minister's Official Residence, and speaking of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling operations in the Indian Ocean, declared: "We on the part of the government will do all we can to continue the operations." The ambassador expressed strong hope for a continuation of the MSDF's refueling mission, saying, "It is an important task not only for the United States but also for the international community, including countries engaged in the operation in the Indian Ocean."

After the meeting, Schieffer told reporters: "We will welcome Japan's continued refueling operations even if (Japan's assistance) is limited to the supply of oil and water." Referring to the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) call on the government to disclose the results of the MSDF's operations in the Indian Ocean, Schieffer indicated he would respond to that request, saying, "We will provide classified information to Diet members so that they can understand (the achievements). I think doing so is very important, and I don't think there is anything to hide in this regard." Afterwards, the ambassador met with Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura at the Foreign Ministry.

(9) Diet debate starting today: Doubts remain about Environment Minister Kamoshita's erroneous loan records, use of blank receipts

YOMIURI (Page 38) (Full)

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September 12, 2007

Corrections of political fund reports by lawmakers are continuing. The politics and money issue, including an amendment to the Political Fund Control Law, will be one of the key issues in the extra Diet session, where interpellations are to start on Sept. 12. A number of record-keeping errors have been found in the political fund reports filed by some cabinet ministers, including Environment Minister Kamoshita. They will likely be asked to provide more explanations.

Among several erroneous entries found in Kamoshita's fund reports, the amount of borrowings reported by his fund management body first came into question. The body's reports since 1998 recorded 10 million yen as a loan extended by Kamoshita in Aug. 1996. However, its fund report for 1996 claimed 2 million yen as a borrowing. Which entry is correct? If the 1 million yen is correct, the remaining 8

million yen would present a problem.

Kamoshita corrected his fund reports for 10 years through 2006, claiming that the correct amount was 2 million yen. However, as grounds for the correction, he cited his own memory, which he admitted to be unclear, and produced a copy of part of his own bank book, which has a record of the withdrawal of 2 million yen. However, it is not possible to determine that this 2 million yen was loaned to the fund management body.

Slipshod management of fund reports by Kamoshita is also visible in his handling of copies of receipts that have to be attached to the reports.

The branch of the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Tokyo Constituency No. 13 headed by Kamoshita did not attach three receipts for printing expenses totaling 1.49 million yen to the 2003 fund report.

On Sept. 10, it was found that five copies of receipts (totaling 1.47 million yen) with the names to which they were issued deleted were attached to the same fund report. Kamoshita explained that since the receipts were issued to an official in charge instead of to the branch office, his secretary deleted the name out of excessive concern. However, his explanation is unclear, because he did not produce the original receipts.

Agriculture Minister Wakabayashi has also a problem regarding his relationship with his supporters, as can be seen in the fact that the chairman of his supporters' association in Tokyo (now resigned) doubled as the head of a subsidy distribution organization. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Mitsuhide Iwaki has also been asked to give explanations on the issue of a political body related to him having doubly reported expenses to hire the hall used for the speech meeting.

(10) MSDF withdrawal will harm solidarity among countries taking part in war on terrorism

YOMIURI (Page 17) (Abridged slightly)  
September 12, 2007

By Koichi Furusho, former MSDF chief of staff

Under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, the Maritime  
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Self-Defense Force has been providing assistance to naval vessels of other countries that are taking part in the war on terrorism from the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf. Is the Japanese public fully aware of it? What is the Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) of the last six years? What did it accomplish? What is the evaluation of it by the rest of the world? Did the government and Defense Ministry explain all those matters to the general public?

When the government decided to dispatch the MSDF immediately after 9/11, I was in a position to command the unit in the field as the commander of the fleet escort force. I felt that I had to brace for the job, thinking that Japan had finally decided to fulfill its responsibility against the threat of terrorism as a member of the international community.

But the government eventually enacted the special measures law chiefly designed to provide refueling services in "safe waters" instead of danger zones. Initially an Aegis vessel was also excluded from the unit headed for the Indian Ocean for fear of violating the Constitution, which prohibits exercising the right to collective self-defense. This apparently injured the pride of the MSDF troops. Given the situation, I instructed the commander and the troops picked for the Indian Ocean mission to fulfill their duties, for such would serve the country's national interests.

The refueling mission of the last six years in a severe environment as part of the coalition forces has given the MSDF troops confidence and pride.

Every year, new MSDF officers go on a long training cruise lasting 150 days or so. The readiness of destinations receiving the MSDF officers has markedly changed on the back of the war on terrorism, according to a report by the commander of the long cruise.

For instance, while in France in 2007, the group was reportedly offered free fuel directly from the French Navy chief of staff in appreciation of the MSDF mission in the Indian Ocean. In Germany, the joint operations headquarters deputy commander, upon spotting the name of the unit commander, reportedly hastily came back from his summer vacation to return favors the German forces had owed in the Indian Ocean.

I also heard that commanders of naval forces of other countries carrying out activities in the Indian Ocean indicated that the presence of MSDF supply ships and destroyers in their operational waters has given them a sense of reassurance.

Apart from the war on terrorism, MSDF troops were able to rush to rescue victims in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster in December 2004 owing largely to the presence of MSDF vessels in waters from the Persian Gulf to Japan.

Above all, the mission in the Indian Ocean has enabled the MSDF to forge strong relations of trust with naval forces of other countries. However, I still believe it is in Japan's best interests to deploy destroyers in the permissible scope to join the MIO to interdict terrorists, weaponry and ammunition, as in the case with other countries.

Needless to say, decisions must be made on the diplomatic and military fronts based on national interests. Should Japan withdraw from the Indian Ocean without presenting any alternative to the

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Antiterrorism Law, it would have an immeasurable impact on the solidarity of the countries participating in the war on terrorism. Japan would also be left behind the United States and the rest of the world. In view of the magnitude of the matter, the government must not make any mistake in national policy by letting party interests stand in the way.

(11) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
September 11, 2007

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of a survey conducted in August.)

Q: Do you support the Abe cabinet?

Yes 29.0 (27.2)  
No 60.7 (63.7)  
Other answers (O/A) 2.6 (3.1)  
No answer (N/A) 7.7 (5.9)

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the foregoing question)  
Give up to two reasons for your approval of the Abe cabinet.

I can appreciate its political stance 25.7 (27.6)  
It's stable 7.1 (8.8)  
The prime minister is trustworthy 25.5 (22.0)  
There's a fresh image of the prime minister 30.9 (29.4)  
I can appreciate its economic policy 3.9 (7.4)  
I can appreciate its foreign policy 12.2 (11.3)  
Because it's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito 17.4 (19.8)  
It's better than its predecessors 9.8 (8.6)  
O/A+N/A 13.1 (11.1)

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the foregoing question) Give up to two reasons for your disapproval of the Abe cabinet.

I can't appreciate its political stance 39.4 (47.1)

It's unstable 45.2 (34.1)  
The prime minister is untrustworthy 26.3 (26.3)  
The prime minister lacks political experience 18.6 (18.2)  
I can't appreciate its economic policy 16.4 (18.8)  
I can't appreciate its foreign policy 3.6 (3.4)  
Because it's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito 7.0 (8.7)  
It's worse than its predecessors 13.0 (12.8)  
O/A+N/A 3.2 (4.5)

Q: What issues do you want the Abe cabinet to pursue on a priority basis? Pick as many as you like from among those listed below, if any.

Economic, employment measures 47.4  
Fiscal reconstruction 20.5  
Tax reform, consumption tax 31.5  
Social security reform, including pension and healthcare systems 63.3  
Low birthrate countermeasures, including childcare support 25.7  
Education reform 20.3

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Social divide, including income gaps 29.2  
Administrative reform, including public service personnel cuts 19.8  
Politics and money issues 40.1  
Asia diplomacy, including China and South Korea 10.9  
North Korea 24.0  
Defense, security 11.2  
Constitutional revision 7.2  
Crisis management, including disaster prevention 10.7  
Public security, crime prevention 18.7  
Environmental protection 20.4  
Food safety 21.3  
O/A + nothing in particular + N/A 3.1

Q: Which political party do you support now? Pick only one.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 29.3 (25.8)  
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 20.9 (26.9)  
New Komeito (NK) 3.3 (3.6)  
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 1.8 (2.2)  
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1.0 (1.0)  
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.2 (0.2)  
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.2 (0.4)  
Other political parties --- (0.1)  
None 42.4 (38.7)  
N/A 1.0 (1.1)

Q: Under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, the government has sent Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels to the Indian Ocean, where the MSDF is currently engaged in fuel and other supply services for foreign naval vessels to back up the antiterror campaign of multinational forces in Afghanistan. The antiterror law is to expire Nov. 1 this year. Do you support extending the MSDF's mission in the Indian Ocean?

Yes 29.3  
No 38.8  
Can't say which 28.6  
N/A 3.2

Q: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Endo has now resigned to take responsibility for the fact that an agricultural mutual aid association headed by him was found to have improperly received government subsidies. As his successor, Prime Minister Abe appointed former Environment Minister Wakabayashi. After seeing such a series of events, what's your image of the Abe cabinet now?

Better 3.4  
Worse 47.3  
No change 46.7  
N/A 2.6

Polling methodology

Date of survey: Sept. 8-9.

Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random sampling basis).

Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.

Number of valid respondents: 1,787 persons (59.6 PERCENT ).

SCHIEFFER